

WASHINGTON, DC—Congressman Peter DeFazio (D-Springfield) and 24 other members of Congress today sent a letter to three House committee chairmen calling on them to hold hearings on developments with Iran. DeFazio organized the letter which was sent to Rep. Ike Skelton, Chairman of the House Armed Services Committee; Rep. Tom Lantos, Chairman of the House Foreign Affairs Committee; and Rep. Silvestre Reyes, Chairman of the House Intelligence Committee. The letter urges the chairmen to hold hearings to investigate the status of U.S. diplomatic efforts with Iran, Iran's nuclear activities, and preparations for U.S. military action against Iran and possible consequences of such actions.

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Last April, DeFazio organized 62 members to sign a letter to President Bush reminding him of his constitutional obligation to seek congressional approval before making any pre-emptive military strikes in Iran. DeFazio introduced legislation, H.Con.Res. 33, which makes the same point. In September 2006, DeFazio sent a letter to Secretary Rice regarding the negotiations between Iran, the E.U. and the U.S. And, in May 2007, DeFazio offered an amendment to the fiscal year 2008 Department of Defense Authorization Act to prohibit the president from taking military action against Iran without authorization from Congress. Unfortunately, this amendment was defeated.

The text of today's DeFazio letter follows:

The Honorable Ike Skelton
Chairman House Committee on Armed Services
2120 Rayburn House Office Building

Washington, D.C. 20515

The Honorable Tom Lantos
Chairman House Committee of Foreign Affairs
2170 Rayburn House Office Building
Washington, D.C. 20515

The Honorable Silvestre Reyes
Chairman House Permanent Select Committee on Intelligence
H-405, U.S. Capitol
Washington, D.C. 20515

October 31, 2007

Dear Chairman Skelton, Chairman Lantos, and Chairman Reyes:

We are alarmed by reports that planning for military action against Iran is in advanced stages. We are writing to request that your committees hold a series of hearings soon on developments with Iran, including the status and substance of the diplomatic track with Iran, intelligence

related to Iran's nuclear program and activities in Iraq, and preparations for U.S. military action against Iran and the possible consequences and outcomes of such a step.

We are growing increasingly concerned that the strategies used by the Bush administration in the march toward war with Iraq are being replicated in a drive to war with Iran. There are questions about the reliability of the intelligence related to Iran, both related to its nuclear program and activities in Iraq. We see shifting justifications for the possibility of military action. The administration and its allies present rosy scenarios for the outcome of military action. And there appears to be no thought given to what happens after military action is taken or to the likelihood of an Iranian response.

Although there was dissent within Congress to the administration's push for war in Iraq by ourselves and others, Congress as an institution, through its committees, failed the American people. Our military, in particular, has suffered from the prior Congress' failure to ask tough questions, challenge the administration's assumptions, and force a public debate. This Congress must not make the same grave mistake.

We are requesting that you bring in officials from the Department of Defense, the Department of State and the Intelligence Community and put them under oath. We are requesting that you examine the actual evidence the administration claims to have. We are asking you to seek out dissenters within the agencies. We are requesting that you bring in dozens or hundreds of experts from academia, think tanks, and elsewhere to fully examine the administration's arguments and assumptions, which do not deserve to be taken at face value. Congress needs to hear from those in favor of military action, against military action, in favor of diplomacy, and skeptical of diplomacy. Congress needs to hear from historians and from those who understand the inner workings of the Iranian regime. And Congress needs to hear from international experts and diplomats as well, including individuals in the Middle East.

A few areas that we believe need to be examined include:

Does the President believe he has the authority to take military action against Iran without authorization from Congress? If so, under what authority and in what circumstances?

In 2003, Iran approached the United States offering to negotiate on a wide variety of

long-standing issues important to our two countries, including Iran's nuclear program, support for terrorists, relations with Israel, diplomatic relations, and non-proliferation. The Bush administration rejected this request. Why? Has the situation gotten better or worse as a result of this decision? Why has the Bush administration repeatedly rejected proposals for a so-called "Grand Bargain" with Iran dealing with the nuclear issue, support for terrorism, non-aggression pacts etc. when that is exactly what the administration just agreed to with North Korea? A similarly broad deal was also cut with Libya.

From 2003-2006, Iran and the E.U. (with the tacit or explicit support of the U.S.) has exchanged a variety of proposals and counter proposals that explore the possibilities of diplomatic progress in a variety of areas, including over Iran's nuclear program. What is the status of these negotiations? Why has little progress appear to have been made despite the similarities in the negotiating positions of Iran and the E.U.? Why has the U.S. conditioned our participation on a suspension of uranium enrichment rather than trying to achieve that through negotiations?

What evidence does the U.S. have that Iran is pursuing nuclear weapons? What are the sources for this evidence? How reliable are they? Are there alternative explanations for this evidence?

What estimates exist for how far away Iran is from developing nuclear weapons, assuming that is in fact what they're doing? What is the U.S. estimate? What are the estimates from foreign intelligence agencies?

Do the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) and foreign intelligence agencies agree with the U.S. analysis on the Iranian nuclear program? Do they have additional evidence? How reliable are their sources?

What is the status of Iran's uranium enrichment program? What is the difference between the expertise needed to enrich uranium for producing energy versus enrichment for nuclear weapons?

Even with a nuclear weapon, does Iran pose a threat to the U.S.? Can Iran be deterred? Does Iran have a delivery system capable of reaching the U.S.?

What are Iran's motives for pursuing nuclear weapons? Can these motives be addressed in a way that would lead Iran to abandon this pursuit?

What role does the Iranian president play, if any, in the nuclear program and Iranian defense and foreign affairs policies more generally? What role does the Revolutionary Guard play? How about the Supreme Leader? The Council of Guardians? The Assembly of Experts? The parliament?

What does the interaction and competition between these branches of the Iranian government mean in terms of diplomacy, the nuclear program, and possibly military action?

What evidence does the administration have related to Iranian involvement in Iraq, including the alleged supply of weapons to groups killing U.S. troops and training of Shia militias? What are the sources for this evidence? How reliable is it? Are there alternative explanations?

The administration has claimed that Iran is aiding Shia and Sunni militias. What is the evidence for this? How reliable is it? What is the incentive for Shia Iran to aid Sunni militias trying to overthrow the Shia government in Iraq?

Is there any evidence the Iranian government itself is involved in the alleged weapons smuggling?

Former U.N. weapons inspector David Kay recently recalled seeing stockpiles of explosively formed penetrators in Iraq when he was looking for weapons of mass destruction soon after the U.S. invasion. Is it possible that the weapons being used against our troops today have come from the black market and unguarded weapons depots rather than from Iran?

Iraqi Prime Minister Nuri al-Maliki told the Washington Post that Iraqi relations with Iran had "improved to the point that they are not interfering in our internal affairs." Is that true? Why does the Iraqi Prime Minister have a different viewpoint than U.S. military and

intelligence officials?

To the extent Iranian officials are involved in Iraq, are they there at the invitation of the Iraqi government? What does that mean in terms of U.S. concerns?

What are the implications of military action against Iran? Could its nuclear program be destroyed, or would Iran merely accelerate it in response? What would the impact be in Iraq, particularly for U.S. troops? Would Moktada al-Sadr direct his militia to come to the aid of the Iranians as he has promised? What about other Shia militias, would they also rise up against U.S. troops? To the extent some argue that there is still a chance for U.S. troops to stabilize Iraq, wouldn't that be obliterated by military action against Iran?

Many experts believe Iran would retaliate against Israel, as well as in the E.U. and maybe in the U.S. Does Iran have the capability to do so? What is the likelihood of such attacks? What is the likely scale of such attacks? Can they be prevented?

The administration is reportedly changing its military strategy for Iran from one of counterproliferation (i.e. bombing Iran's nuclear sites) to one of counterterrorism (i.e. bombing facilities associated with the Revolutionary Guard Corps because of their alleged involvement in Iraq). What are the implications of this change? How would Iran respond?

How do the different military services view military action against Iran? Are the Army and Marines supportive? What about the Navy and Air Force?

Are there plans to insert ground forces, including special forces, into Iran?

Has the U.S. already inserted special forces into Iran in order to work with Iranian opposition groups and survey possible bombing targets?

Given the strain on the U.S. military from the war in Iraq, does the U.S. even have enough

troops for a sustained campaign against Iran?

The Iranian people are widely believed to be pro-West. How would the Iranian people respond to an attack on their country?

What are the views of U.S. allies, both in the region and outside the region, on the wisdom of military action against Iran?

Thank you for your consideration of our request and for your important work on behalf of the American people.

Sincerely,

DeFazio

Woolsey

Danny Davis

Blumenauer

Hirono

Maloney

Farr

Fattah

Grijalva

Kucinich

Welch

Lee

Christensen

Hooley

Honda

Baldwin

M. Udall

Filner

McGovern

Hinchey

Norton

Jackson Jr.

Moran

Schakowsky

Ellison